



# Freight Transportation Profile—Alabama

## Freight Analysis Framework

Understanding future freight activity is important for matching infrastructure supply to demand and for assessing potential investment and operational strategies. To help decisionmakers identify areas in need of capacity improvements, the U.S. Department of Transportation developed the Freight Analysis Framework (FAF), a comprehensive national data and analysis tool, including county-to-county freight flows for the truck, rail, water, and air modes. FAF also forecasts freight activity in 2010 and 2020 for each of these modes. Information about the methodology used in developing FAF is available on the Office of Freight Management and Operations’ website [www.ops.fhwa.dot.gov/freight](http://www.ops.fhwa.dot.gov/freight).

The U.S. freight transportation network moves a staggering volume of goods each year. Over 15 billion tons of goods, worth over \$9 trillion, were moved in 1998. The movement of bulk goods, such as grains, coal, and ores, still comprises a large share of the tonnage moved on the U.S. freight network. However, lighter and more valuable goods, such as computers and office equipment, now make up an increasing proportion of what is moved. FAF estimates that trucks carried about 71 percent of the total tonnage and 80 percent of the total value of U.S. shipments in 1998. By 2020, the U.S. transportation system is expected to handle about 23 billion tons of cargo valued at nearly \$30 trillion.

### Alabama

Table 1 presents information on freight shipments that have either an origin or a destination in Alabama. As shown in the table, trucks moved a large percentage of the tonnage and value of shipments, followed by the rail and water modes. Figures 1 and 2 show freight flows on the highway and rail modes.

Truck traffic is expected to grow throughout the state over the next 20 years. Much of the growth will occur in urban areas and on the Interstate highway system (Figures 3 and 4). Truck traffic moving to and from Alabama accounted for 12 percent of the average annual daily truck traffic (AADTT) on the FAF road network. About 18 percent of truck traffic involved in-state shipments, and 30 percent involved trucks traveling across the state to other markets. Approximately 40 percent of the AADTT were not identified with a route-specific origin or destination.

Table 2 shows the top five commodity groups shipped to, from, and within Alabama by all modes. The top commodities by weight are secondary traffic, nonmetallic minerals, and lumber or wood products. Secondary traffic is also the top commodity by value. Secondary traffic is defined as freight flows to and from distribution centers or through intermodal facilities. No commodities are assigned to this intermediate step in the transportation process.

Table 1. Freight Shipments To, From, and Within Alabama: 1998, 2010, and 2020

ALABAMA	Tons (millions)			Value (billions \$)		
	1998	2010	2020	1998	2010	2020
State Total	459	664	813	263	514	809
By Mode						
Air	<1	<1	<1	7	16	27
Highway	310	469	585	228	452	711
Other <sup>a</sup>	7	9	11	<1	1	2
Rail	92	121	143	20	36	54
Water	50	64	73	6	10	14
By Destination/Market						
Domestic	426	619	755	245	480	749
International	33	45	58	17	34	60

Note: Modal numbers may not add to totals due to rounding.

<sup>a</sup> The “Other” category includes international shipments that moved via pipeline or by an unspecified mode.

**Figure 1. Freight Flows To, From, and Within Alabama by Truck: 1998 (tons)**



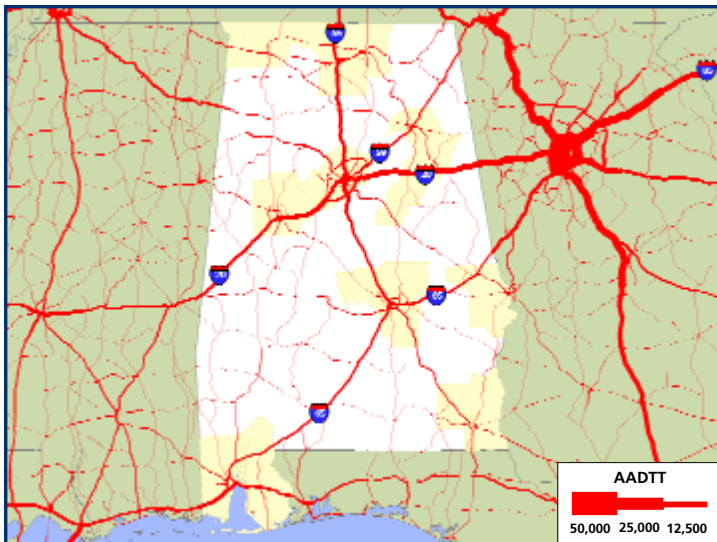
Federal Highway Administration

**Figure 2. Freight Flows To, From, and Within Alabama by Rail: 1998 (tons)**



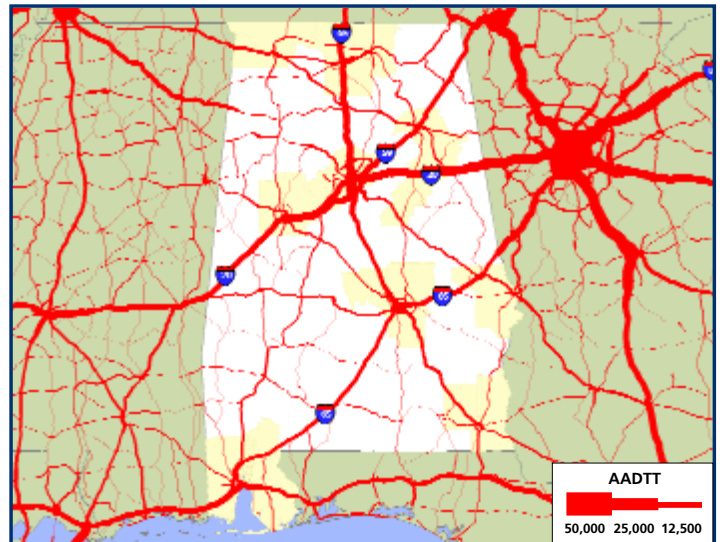
Federal Railroad Administration

**Figure 3. Estimated Average Annual Daily Truck Traffic: 1998**



Federal Highway Administration

**Figure 4. Estimated Average Annual Daily Truck Traffic: 2020**



Federal Highway Administration

**Table 2. Top Five Commodities Shipped To, From, and Within Alabama by All Modes: 1998 and 2020**

Commodity	Tons (millions)		Commodity	Value (billions \$)	
	1998	2020		1998	2020
Secondary Traffic	66	180	Secondary Traffic	68	276
Nonmetallic Minerals	64	83	Chemicals/Allied Products	26	58
Lumber/Wood Products	62	112	Lumber/Wood Products	23	71
Coal	53	75	Transportation Equipment	22	56
Clay/Concrete/Glass/Stone	34	76	Food/Kindred Products	21	70

**For More Information, Please Contact**

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A series of FAF products are available on the website noted below. FAF outputs include freight flow maps for states, modes, and gateways; detailed databases on traffic flows and commodity movements; information on the methodologies used to develop FAF; and forecast assumptions.

The U.S. Department of Transportation, Bureau of Transportation Statistics (BTS) is also developing a series of state transportation profiles. For more information and to obtain a copy of the BTS reports, please call 202-366-DATA.



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